

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9314
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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 0610

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS 1, 4 DIMPTD
TAGS: PGOV EPAP SHUM VM
SUBJECT: FOOD RATIONING IN VIET NAM

REF: (A) VIENTIANE 599; (B) VIENTIANE 597

1. ACCORDING TO A REPORT FROM A RECENT VISITOR FROM VIET NAM, THE SRV HAS SET UP A NATION-WIDE FOOD RATIONING SYSTEM THROUGH WHICH RICE AND OTHER STAPLE FOODS SUCH AS WHEAT FLOUR, CASSAVA, AND SWEET POTATOES, AS WELL AS OTHER BASIC FOOD COMMODITIES, ARE DISTRIBUTED TO THE POPULATION AT A LOW FIXED PRICE. (IN MARCH 1978, APPROXIMATELY 50 PERCENT OF THE RATIONS WERE IN RICE.)

2. THE FOLLOWING INDICATIVE NATIONAL NORMS HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF RICE (OR ITS EQUIVALENT) BASED ON AGE GROUPS AND THE TYPE OF WORK PERFORMED BY THE BENEFICIARIES. (WHEN TWO FIGURES ARE GIVEN, THE RATION VARIES ACCORDING TO THE AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES.):

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FISHERMAN (SEA FISHING): 27 - 30 KG PER MONTH
MANUAL LABORERS (HARD LABOR): 21 - 24 KG PER MONTH
SPECIALIZED WORKERS (NOT FURTHER IDENTIFIED): 17 - 19 KG PER MONTH
STUDENTS (SECONDARY LEVEL AND ABOVE): 17 KG PER MONTH
SCHOOL CHILDREN: 15 KG PER MONTH
CIVIL SERVANTS: 13 KG PER MONTH

UNEMPLOYED ADULTS: 13 (UNEMPLOYED ADULTS IN CITIES WHO REFUSE JOB OFFERS, INCLUDING TRANSFER TO NEW ECONOMIC ZONES, DO NOT RECEIVE RATIONS.)

OLD PEOPLE: 10 KG PER MONTH

CHILDREN (AGE 1 YEAR): 4 KILOGRAM

(AGE 3 YEARS): 6 KG

(AGE 5 YEARS): 8 KG

3. THE "NATIONAL NORMS" ARE ADJUSTED AT THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL ON THE BASIS OF AVAILABLE RESOURCES, ACCORDING TO VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS.

4. RESPONSIBILITY FOR DISTRIBUTION OF RATIONS FALLS UNDER TWO DIFFERENT SRV DEPARTMENTS: THE RICE DEPARTMENT AND THE FOOD DEPARTMENT. THE RICE DEPARTMENT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR DISTRIBUTION OF STAPLE FOODS, WHILE THE FOOD DEPARTMENT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISTRIBUTION (THROUGH SALE AT LOW FIXED PRICES) OF OTHER COMMODITIES SUCH AS FISH SAUCE, SUGAR, SALT, (IN THE MOUNTAIN AREAS), FISH, SOYA, BEANS. AND ATS, THE FOLLOWING MONTHLY RATIONS HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED: FISH SAUCE--ONE LITRE PER PERSON; FISH (OR SOYA, PORK, OR ANIMAL/VEGETABLE FATS ACCORDING TO AVAILABLE RESOURCES) - ONE KILO FOR THREE PERSONS; SUGAR FROM ONE HALF TO TWO KILOS PER PERSON (ACCORDING TO THE CATEGORY OF THE BENEFICIARIES).

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5. THE GOVERNMENT FIXED PRICE (PRIOR TO THE RECENT CURRENCY CHANGE) WAS AS FOLLOWS: RICE PER KILO WAS .40 DONG IN THE NORTH AND .32 DONG IN THE SOUTH. IN MARCH, BEFORE THE CRACKDOWN ON THE FREE MARKET, RICE SOLD PRIVATELY COST SIX OR MORE TIMES THE GOVERNMENT PRICE.

6. COMMENT: THE SRV'S REFUSAL OF BASIC FOOD RATIONS TO SOME CITIZENS (UNEMPLOYED ADULTS WHO REFUSE TO ACCEPT TRANSFER TO A NEW ECONOMIC ZONE), COUPLED WITH A GOVERNMENT POLICY TO ELIMINATE THE FREE MARKET SALE OF FOODS (AND OTHER ITEMS), APPARENTLY POSES FOR MANY VIETNAMESE THE STARK DILEMMA OF RESETTLEMENT IN UNDEVELOPED "NEW ECONOMIC ZONES" OR STARVATION.
ROBERTS

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